

Compare and contrast two leaders history essay



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According to (Richard. L. Huges, 2009) “ Leadership is a social influence process shared among all members of the group”. It is the ability to inspire and at the same time influence others to strive towards one common goal. The aim of this paper is to compare and contrast two leaders: Steve Job who was a business leader for Apple Company and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who was a political and spiritual leader of India whose main focus was on “ non-violence”. Firstly, I would declare which one of these two great leaders was more effective. Secondly, I will evaluate what skills they demonstrated to make themselves such great leaders in the business, political and spiritual world.

Finally, meaningful conclusions will be drawn from the discussions of the two leaders. The relevant information and content for this paper were gathered from books, lectures, newsletters and internet research. I wish to acknowledge the assistance of my wife and colleagues for their valuable contributions toward this paper.

2. The comparison between two great leaders: Mahatma Gandhi and Steve Jobs

In commencement, I would say that both leaders were great at inspiring and motivating others. Although their struggle involved the achievement of different objectives (Gandhi- the independence of India and the freedom and equality of its citizens and Jobs- constant and aggressive innovation and creativity in products and services), their leadership styles were somewhat similar in accomplishing their goals.

According to (Gupta, 2008) “ Gandhi without a doubt could inspire and move the masses in India” and around the world when he so convincingly

demonstrated that even a common man can make a difference by bringing the British empire down. He accomplished this feat with his principles of self-reliance and non-cooperation to the British Autocracy. He willingly inherited the support of many Indian citizens against the fight of this dictatorship. He believed in effecting change through positive conflict; he organized many peaceful protests and marches and effectively utilized the tactics of civil disobedience to undermine the British Rulership. He explicitly exhibited through the ' Salt March' that change can be effected through peaceful protests rather than anarchy and chaos. A fight for liberation was a fight that everyone felt a part of.

Steve Jobs, who was also inspired by the legendary Mahatma Gandhi, inculcated a similar method in the way he inspired the employees of Apple Company to work assiduously towards the production of the best product for the company. He served as a motivator for many current CEOs with his hard knock style of leadership in the peculiar way he took his company into a new era. Especially because of his “ think different message and ability to continuously surprise and deliver on his vision” as cited in (Gupta, 2010). Jobs is particularly noted for his philosophy to make products which were at the intersection of art and technology, intuitiveness and design. His openness to being inspired allowed him to live his philosophy, and in turn inspire others.

Secondly Gandhi and Steve Jobs build relationships with their followers through their leadership styles, which enabled them to execute their visions of being successful leaders. Gandhi connected with people of all classes, creed, religion and beliefs and built powerful relationships by his simple

deportment of a white dhoti along with his modesty and humility which he displayed, indiscriminately with everyone by touring across India, leading all the major movements personally and by holding various public meetings repeatedly. Steve Jobs build relationships with all employees and remained simple by wearing jeans and t-shirt despite holding the prestigious position of CEO of the Apple Company. Both leaders understood that in order to gain the loyalty and commitment of their followers, the autocratic distinction and segregation between superior and subordinate through corporate attire, offices and other luxuries had to be abolished. In the instance of Jobs, employees need to feel comfortable, not intimidated, in order exploit their highest potential and creativity. Likewise, Gandhi's philosophy preached "Love for one and all: friend or foe".

Thirdly, great credibility can be seen with Gandhi, through his initial work and movements in South Africa, so Indian society would already know what a great leader he was, by using his non-violent methods to attain his goals. He led through example by being a slave for the people of India and empowering the general public. According to (Gupta, 2008) "He made it his policy to practice what he preached, even to the small things like spinning yarn to make his own clothes. He resorted to simple and poor living, just like millions in the country, hence people looked at Gandhi as one of their own, and they could see their own sufferings in him". While Steve Jobs according to (Gupta, 2010) "is known to be secretive and does not give too many interviews or public appearances, his strategy, though adds to an element of surprise and curiosity, also provides him the necessary credibility. People

know from his past that he delivers on his promise and does not create a false smoke screen of distraction and deception”.

In addition both of these leaders were visionary; one of the most outstanding qualities of Gandhi his long term vision, self confidence and strong principles of righteousness. He would have envisioned freedom for his followers a very long time before Indian got Independence from the British. Steve Jobs was known to have a stubborn and perfectionist attitude, which led in executing his vision, which was according to (Reed, 2012) “ making the best and most original products the world had ever seen” even under adverse market conditions demanding quick reaction. He could envision new product and know what it would look like months before he would have make it.

Furthermore both leaders had Faith them self -Mahatma Gandhi and Steve Jobs believed in themselves, both believed that they had a great responsibility. Firstly, Gandhi believed that it was his duty to free his country and he exhibited complete faith in his abilities, strategies and principles. He knew he'd a play a significant role in the freedom of India and so he did in accordance with his famous quote “ Be the change you want to see in the World”. It was this undying faith and confidence in himself that eventually manifested itself in the faith of millions of Indians in him.

Similarly, Steve Jobs believed that it was his responsibility to grow the Apple Company through pioneering new products and services through constant innovation. Infact, his intense secrecy about products through their early stages of production clearly depicts his complete confidence in himself. Conventionally, companies invest in rigorous advertising during the

production process of a new product so that by the time the finished product is ready for launch, there is already a committed market with full awareness of the features of the product and willingness to buy. However, Job's strategy was quite different; the public knew nothing of the Job's products until the official launching was instituted. He desired greatly the element of surprise and was confident that his launching tactics were more than enough to raise awareness and willingness to buy the product.

Last but not least both were Great Tacticians: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Steve Jobs were men of intense strategies and tactics and these strategies were well in sync with their beliefs and principles. Gandhi's main objective was to end the British Dictatorship and gain India's independence. However, his fervent belief in peace and non violence restrained him from leading an anarchic and chaotic revolution. Nevertheless, Britain succumbed to his demands through his tactics of organised massive civil disobedience. This can be seen in his most famous protest called the Salt March. Against a British policy of taxing the use of salt for Indians, he organized a 388 km march to the sea at Dandhi, Gujarat and make salt for himself. This campaign was extremely successful in upsetting the British and the government decided to negotiate with Gandhi. His peaceful resistance was his main weapon that leads him to victory. Steve Jobs had some tactics too that realised his dreams of constant innovation and creativity. His perfectionism, belief in the element of surprise and balance between micromanagement and strategic direction helped him to achieve his objectives.

3. Contrasting two leaders Mahatma Gandhi and Steve Jobs

Mahatma Gandhi and Steve Jobs, although very similar in many ways, were also very different in many ways in their leadership styles (the great paradox). Their differences stem from the different culture their vision, different generation era and different end results/goals.

Firstly, Steve Jobs was a more authoritarian leader in the working environment while Mahatma Gandhi was a Servant Leader in the political and spiritual environment. He used his tactics of massive civil disobedience to organised millions of people in Indian to employ non-cooperation, non-violence and peaceful resistance as his “ weapons” in the struggle against the British. Jobs on the other hand, because of his perfectionist quality, used a dictator type of leadership style to get the best from his employees. He ensured that the employees worked towards his vision which was to envision a better world of improved services and products.

Secondly, Mahatma Gandhi was not interested in affluence and material wealth in life. This could be seen in the simple clothes he wore, the way he communicated with the common man and the way he lived his life. While Steve Jobs’s main goal was to impress and capture the world with his services and products and at the same time lead a creative and innovative company in the prestigious position of CEO.

Thirdly, Mahatma Gandhi ardently exhibited and practised love for all in accordance with his inspirational quote “ Love for one and all, friend or foe”. He was able to channel public discontent into a positive element not with force but by love; this trait was always present in his leadership. Steve jobs demonstrated no emotions towards his employees; his only passion was to produce the best product for the market and ensure that his employees work

towards his vision. Jobs was the kind of leader who concentrated solely on getting the project completed and probably regarded the employees as an instrument in the completion of the project. He paid little or no attention to the personal lives or issues of his employees.

In addition, Mahatma Gandhi was a great communicator; he was a great public speaker who was fearless and eloquent in convincing his followers of his objectives. Public awareness of his vision was imperative in achieving Gandhi's liberation; hence, he brilliantly utilized his journalistic skills to write various articles about his vision. On the other hand, Steve Jobs seldom interacted with the public in an attempt to product the originality, creativity and competitive advantage of his new products. He was noted however, to give public speeches at the launching a new product which was the only time he actually interacted with the public.

4. Who of the two was the more effective leader?

Mahatma Gandhi was a more effective leader in terms of how he fought for his followers because he had a passion to fight for people who suffered inequality and discrimination. His excellent knowledge of English law, as a result of his legal studies in England, provided him with the skills he needed to effectively battle against the autocracy of the British without breaching any laws. Since he had study in England and would have known the consequence of breaking the law. With his tactics of peace and non violence, he organised millions of people and convinced them of his cause without any element of duress or coercion. He believed in justice and equity and opined that injustice to one was injustice to all. He urged that one who observed and

passively acquiesced to a tremendous injustice done to someone was just as culpable as the perpetrator of the injustice. His righteousness, transparency and philanthropic disposition automatically attracted many followers.

Motivating people was a natural talent of Gandhi because of his unison of thought, word and deed. His followers never questioned his intentions nor mistrusted him because he was always genuine and truthful to them. In addition, he was a leader in the true sense: he formulated and executed all his plans fearlessly and was always the initiator of action plans.

5. What skills did they demonstrate?

They were many skills which Mahatma Gandhi displayed as being as a true leader for his followers

Firstly, leadership was one of Gandhi's heroic qualities. His leadership was overtly displayed through his motivation of the lower class in his village to begin home spinning their own clothing. He initiated the gesture by making his own clothes at home which he later wore to walk with his followers. This gesture was the beginning of poverty reduction within the lower class as many were able to start businesses in clothes making. Moreover, Gandhi fought diligently to end the issue of discrimination among the lower class in the Hindu religion. Gandhi focused a lot of his energy in ending this segregation and made them realize how important it was for them to be allies rather than rivals in order to survive and battle against the British Rulership. The Indian Independence Movement was the all-time heroic deed led by Gandhi. This movement was accomplished in 1947 by Mahatma Gandhi. In essence, he proved that leadership and loyalty are achieved

through transparency not hypocrisy, through inspiration not coercion and through cooperation and not disintegration.

Secondly, simplicity, modesty and humility were some of the most evident qualities of Gandhi. He believed in living a simple life with only the basic necessities. He was completely detached from luxury and materialism. He was neither arrogant nor haughty even though he was a lawyer. He never felt the need to be adorned extensively and thus dressed simply with his white dhoti, which was home spun. Even though he accomplished such greatness and triumphed over so many obstacles, he neither sought recognition nor gratitude. He vowed to remain a simple man in accordance with his quote “ I claim to be no more than an average man with less than average ability”. His instinctive ability to always speak the truth was another outstanding quality of Gandhi. “ Even if I am a minority of one, truth is still the truth”.

In addition, bravery and courage were imperative to achieve the many feats of Gandhi. It took immense courage and valiance to demonstrate strong opposition to the British Autocracy. All the marches and protests, in particular, the Salt March were incredible symbolism of valour and heroism. He simply believed very strongly in something and fought tirelessly to achieve it. He was determined to disallow any acts intended to instill fear to impede his path of success and quickly recuperated from physical abuse and unlawful imprisonment. It was almost as though he was immune to acts of violence directed against him.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, Gandhi and Steve jobs were both outstanding heroes in their own generation era. Both leaders possessed numerous qualities consistent with being exemplary individuals. They set many examples for several countries and companies to follow. They both had their own beliefs and dreams and they fought relentlessly to achieve them.

Gandhi triumphed despite all the impediments thrown in his path to instil failure. And the most celebrated part was that he did it with peace and non-violence. Leadership, simplicity and bravery were the three most outstanding qualities in Gandhi. While Steve Jobs conquered the world by being a perfectionist and having a vivid imagination. His scrupulous attention to detail and his infinite imagination enabled him to create products of wonder that amazed and captured the market. He was definitely a man of inventions and creations.